

Although the Congress achieved significant spending restraint this past year, appropriations and other bills that are sent to my desk still contain spending that is not fully justified, is a low priority, or is earmarked to avoid the discipline of competitive or merit-based reviews. When this legislation is presented to me, I now have no ability to line out unnecessary spending. In 1996, the Congress gave the President a line item veto—an important tool to limit wasteful spending—but the Supreme Court struck down that version of the law in 1998.

My proposed legislation, the “Legislative Line Item Veto Act of 2006,” would provide a fast-track procedure to require the Congress to vote up-or-down on rescissions proposed by the President. There has been broad bipartisan support for similar proposals in the past. Under this proposal, the President could propose legislation to re-

scind wasteful spending, and the Congress would be obligated to vote quickly on that package of rescissions, without amendment. The same procedure would apply to new mandatory spending and to special interest tax breaks given to small numbers of individuals.

Forty-three Governors have a line item veto to reduce spending. The President needs similar authority to help control unjustified and wasteful spending in the Federal budget. I urge you to promptly consider and send me this legislation for enactment to reduce unnecessary spending and help achieve my goal of cutting the deficit in half by 2009.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
March 6, 2006.

Remarks at a Celebration of Women’s History Month and International Women’s Day March 7, 2006

Thank you all. Thank you, Laura. Welcome to the White House. We like to call this the people’s house. I want to remind people from around the world that we’re only temporary occupants here, but we’re trying to make the most of our time here.

I want to welcome you all as we celebrate Women’s History Month and International Women’s Day. Thanks for coming. We recognize the many contributions women have made to our country. We also honor those who have helped bring equality and freedom to women around the world.

A lot of strong women have influenced my life—[laughter]—beginning with my mother. [Laughter] She told me to say that, by the way. [Laughter] I am blessed to have a strong wife. And we are raising two young women to become independent, ca-

pable risk takers—[laughter]—so that they can realize their dreams.

I have been blessed to have strong women in my Government. My administration is better off to have really capable women who feel comfortable marching in the Oval Office and giving the President their frank advice. [Laughter]

I want to thank Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao, who is with us; Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings—she’s been giving me frank advice ever since I was the Governor of Texas. [Laughter] I want to thank Karen Hughes—Ambassador Karen Hughes, the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. She’s been really giving me a lot of advice. [Laughter] Paula Dobriansky, the Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs; Harriet Miers, my attorney—by the

way, for those of you who aren't familiar with America, it's always good to have a good attorney. [*Laughter*] Harriet Miers is my attorney. She gives me legal advice.

Fran Townsend is in charge of our—part of the National Security Council in charge of homeland security. Protecting our homeland is a vital part of America, and I rely upon a very capable, strong woman to give me good advice.

I want to thank my friend Pat Brister, who is the U.S. Representative to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, for joining us. Pat is—there she is—from Louisiana, where Laura and I will be tomorrow, by the way.

I want to thank Congresswoman Judy Biggert from the State of Illinois. She's with us. For those of you who are unfamiliar with our Congress, we have a lot of very capable women who are running for office and have become elected—and making a big difference in the Halls of Congress. I appreciate the members of the diplomatic corps who have joined us. Thank you all for coming. It's good to see so many ambassadors and ambassadresses here today. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank the members of the United States-Afghan Women's Council who are here. You all are making a significant difference in the lives of people who are beginning to feel the freshness of the light of democracy. And as Laura mentioned, we were in Afghanistan with President Karzai. And there's nothing better than being in a country that's beginning to realize the benefits of freedom; particularly, women who have been completely suppressed under the Taliban are now beginning to see the beautiful—breathe that beautiful air of a free society. And so I want to thank the members of the United States-Afghan Women's Council for being so diligent and caring and staying with this important issue—that issue being the freedom of women in Afghanistan.

I want to thank the members of the International Republican Institute and the

National Endowment for Democracy. Thank you for hosting our international delegates. Thank you for helping them in their training exercises and sharing expertise and compassion. I want to thank the delegations from Afghanistan and Iraq and around the world for joining us today. You're welcome in the United States of America; I hope you feel that way.

The struggle for women's rights is a story of strong women willing to take the lead. That's particularly true in the United States of America, where women like Susan B. Anthony and Alice Stone Blackwell and Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Rosa Parks changed the course of our Nation's history. Our history was altered because strong women stood up and led. These women broke down barriers to equality. We weren't always an equal society in America, and it required strong leadership to help make America a more equal place. And we're a better place because of the leadership of women throughout our history.

Women today are shaping the future of America as scientists and entrepreneurs and teachers and astronauts. They serve our Nation with honor and distinction in our Armed Forces. The distinguished leadership of women like Secretary of State Condi Rice—where is she—she had an excused absence—[*laughter*—]—and Justice Sandra Day O'Connor has helped open doors for women for future generations.

Across the world, the increasing participation of women in civic and political life has strengthened democracies. A democracy is strong when women participate in the society. The nation of Liberia recently elected its first woman President, and Laura and Secretary Rice were there to witness her swearing-in. I look forward to welcoming her to America, by the way.

Women lead Governments in Germany, in Chile, and the Philippines. In Rwanda, nearly half of the members of Parliament are women. And women are now holding more parliamentary seats in nations like Morocco and Jordan and Tunisia.

In the last 4 years, we have also seen women make great strides in Afghanistan and Iraq—countries where just a few years ago, women were denied basic rights and were brutalized by tyrants. Today in Afghanistan, girls are attending school. That speaks well for Afghanistan's future. Women hold about 20 percent of the seats in the National Assembly. Nobody could have dreamed that was possible 5 years ago. In last fall's elections, about 40 percent of the voters were women. In Iraq, women are voting in large numbers, and when the new Iraqi Parliament takes office, women will hold about one-quarter of the seats.

The United States is working to increase opportunities for women in these two emerging democracies. Through the Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative, we're providing funds for Iraqi women to receive training in political leadership and learn about the legislative process, the judicial system, and how to defend and promote human rights.

In Afghanistan, we're helping women find ways to join the political process at the local level and to acquire the skills they need for advocacy and communication. We're working with the private sector in America to help Afghan women travel abroad to learn more about the political process and to be able to exchange ideas with fellow women, just like which is taking place here in America today.

Our work to help build vibrant and functioning democracies in Afghanistan and Iraq is part of a larger effort to encourage progress across the broader Middle East. We refuse to accept the status quo in the United States of America, particularly when we find women repressed. As women become a part of the democratic process, they help spread freedom and justice and, most importantly of all, hope for a future.

One important program is the Women's Democracy Network, which is holding its inaugural meeting this week in Washington. This conference provides an opportunity for women leaders around the world to con-

nect with each other and serve as mentors for women in developing democracies so they can help shape the future of their nations.

As we work to advance the equality of women in the world's newest democracies, we must remember that many women in other countries around the world are still struggling for basic rights in places like Iran and North Korea and Burma. America will help women stand up for their freedom, no matter where they live.

Recently I welcomed two women from Belarus who were concerned about the repressive nature of their Government. We stand with the women in Belarus who advocate human rights in a runup to this month's election. America will continue to support courageous reformers around the world, women like Burmese dissident Aung San Suu Kyi, who has spent years under house arrest for her efforts to bring democracy to her nation.

We will continue to fight the threats to women across the world. We'll continue working with nations around the world to end the sexual exploitation and the trafficking of women and young girls. It breaks our hearts, our collective hearts, to realize many young girls are sold into sex slavery, and we will use our prestige to stop that evil process.

We will continue working to fight the transmission of HIV/AIDS. America is proud to lead the world in the struggle to defeat this pandemic. We understand that by defeating the pandemic of HIV/AIDS, we will help children and women, who have been disproportionately affected by this horrible pandemic.

We live in extraordinary times. These are exciting times. They are times that require a firm conviction in our beliefs that all people are created equal. We've seen the fall of brutal tyrants and the rise of democracy. We're also seeing women take their rightful place in societies that were once closed and

oppressive. And the United States welcomes the arrival of women into these oppressive societies. There's no doubt in my mind, empowering women in new democracies will make those democracies better countries and help lay the foundation of peace for generations to come.

So Laura and I welcome you to the White House. We're really glad you're here. We're so glad you're here, we're about to throw a reception on your behalf. [Laughter] And we wish you to enjoy it.

May God bless everybody here. May God bless your families, and may God bless our respective nations. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:44 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his

remarks, he referred to President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; former Supreme Court Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor; President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia; Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; President-elect Michelle Bachelet Jeria of Chile; President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines; Irina Krasovskaya and Svyatlana Zavadskaya, widows of prodemocracy advocates who disappeared in Belarus; and Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, who introduced the President. The Women's History Month proclamation of February 27 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on Election Day in Crawford, Texas March 7, 2006

The President. Thank you all.

Q. Was it worth coming?

The President. Yes, you bet. It's always good to come home to vote. And I urge all people to vote when given a chance. It's also good to be home in Texas—get a little rest here in my homestead and then

heading over to New Orleans tomorrow and Mississippi.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:43 p.m. at the Crawford Fire Department. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Tour of Recovery Efforts in the Areas Damaged by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in New Orleans, Louisiana March 8, 2006

I want to thank you all for coming. I want to thank Colonel Setliff for the tour that he just gave the Governor and the mayor and myself, along with Laura and part of our party. I want to thank Colonel Wagenaar for the aerial tour. We just flew over affected parts of Orleans Parish and Jefferson Parish and St. Bernard Parish,

and getting a view of the progress that is being made.

I particularly want to thank my friend Don Powell for his hard work in coordinating Federal efforts with the Governor and the mayor. Governor Blanco and Mayor Nagin have been by my side when